The Cleveland Museum of Art

Mary Cassatt and the Feminine Ideal in 19th-Century Paris

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Exhibition explores images of femininity by Cassatt and her contemporaries

CLEVELAND (October 3, 2012) – The Cleveland Museum of Art presents Mary *Cassatt and the Feminine Ideal in 19th-Century Paris,* an exhibition that explores Cassatt's images of women with those of her contemporaries such as Edgar Degas, Camille Pissarro, Berthe Morisot, Auguste Renoir and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Organized thematically and primarily drawn from the museum's permanent collection, the exhibition contains over 50 works on paper, depicting visions of femininity ranging from the bourgeois wife and mother to peasant women of the countryside to urban women at work in the ballet and the brothel. *Mary Cassatt and the Feminine Ideal in 19th-Century Paris* is on view October 13, 2012–January 21, 2013 in the Cleveland Museum of Art's James and Hanna Bartlett Prints and Drawings Gallery.

The museum's strong holdings of works on paper by Mary Cassatt will be showcased in the exhibition. The collection includes more than a dozen prints spanning the range of Cassatt's activity as a printmaker from her first efforts in 1879 when she was working closely with Degas, to her famous suite of ten color prints of 1890–91 that depict the daily life of the modern, bourgeois woman of 19th-century Paris. In addition to Cassatt's masterpiece in pastel, *After the Bath* (c. 1901), a number of her drawings will also be on view, including studies for several prints in the exhibition. The exhibition will explore Cassatt's experimental approach to printmaking, the medium in which she was ultimately most revolutionary.

While Cassatt celebrated bourgeois mothers and children, her male contemporaries turned their gaze to "public women," the actresses, dancers and prostitutes of the entertainment class of fin-de-siècle Paris. *Mary Cassatt and the Feminine Ideal in 19th-Century Paris* will include drawings in pastel and watercolor as well as etchings and lithographs by Degas, Édouard Manet and Toulouse-Lautrec that represent women of the era from a variety of perspectives. These artists address the darker side of the feminine ideal and examine the complex and often fraught idea of the "modern woman" in late 19th-century Paris. Peasant women working in the countryside are depicted in the work of Camille Pissarro and Auguste Renoir.

Numerous examples from the Cleveland Museum of Art's collection of pastels are highlighted in the exhibition—a rare opportunity for visitors to enjoy spectacularly colorful, light-sensitive works on paper. The exhibition also includes an 18th-century Japanese woodcut that exemplifies the influence of ukiyo-e prints on the work of Cassatt and her contemporaries. The McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, TX has agreed to lend one of Cassatt's color prints for which the Cleveland Museum of Art has the related preparatory drawing.

"Not only will Clevelanders have the chance to reconnect with one of the best-loved works of art in the collection, Cassatt's *After the Bath,* the exhibition and related programming will address the evolving role of the modern woman in the context of French fin-de-siécle society," says Heather Lemonedes, Cleveland Museum of Art curator of drawings. "I'm very much looking forward to bringing out some of the gems of the collection of Impressionist works on paper."

Related Exhibition Programming

Mary Cassatt: An American in Paris
October 14, 2:00 p.m., Recital Hall, Free
Heather Lemonedes, Cleveland Museum of Art curator of drawings
Described by her mother as "intent on fame and money," the boldly independent Mary Cassatt achieved immortality with her images of mothers and children. This lecture will examine Cassatt's life and art in the context of fin-de-siècle Paris, juxtaposing her paintings, pastels, and prints with the art and literature of her contemporary expatriates.

Public Women: Actresses, Dancers, and Prostitutes in 19th-Century Paris
January 9, 6:30 p.m., Recital Hall, Free
Dr. Mary Weaver Chapin, Portland Art Museum
While Mary Cassatt and her contemporaries celebrated the lives of women in the home, other artists turned their gaze to "public women," the actresses, dancers, bar maids, and prostitutes who constituted the entertainment class of fin-de-siècle Paris. This lecture examines the work of Degas, Manet, Toulouse-Lautrec, and others who explored the darker side of the feminine ideal.

Mary Cassatt and the Feminine Ideal in 19th-Century Paris is free and is organized by the Cleveland Museum of Art.

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About the Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art is renowned for the quality and breadth of its collection, which includes more than 63,000 artworks and spans 6,000 years of achievement in the arts. The museum is a significant international forum for exhibitions, scholarship and performing arts and is a leader in digital innovations. One of the top comprehensive art museums in the nation, recognized for its award-winning Open Access program and free of charge to all, the Cleveland Museum of Art is located in the University Circle neighborhood.

The museum is supported in part by residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture and made possible in part by the Ohio Arts Council (OAC), which receives support from the State of Ohio and the National Endowment for the Arts. The OAC is a state agency that funds and supports

quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally and economically. For more information about the museum and its holdings, programs and events, call 888-CMA-0033 or visit cma.org [1].

Press Announcements [2]

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